

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAM-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /068 W

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R 281150Z JUL 75

FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7211

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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1. SUMMARY. SEVERAL VIOLATIONS BY KIRYAT ARBA RESIDENTS OF ESTABLISHED ARRANGEMENTS FOR WORSHIP AT HEBRON'S TOMBS OF THE PATRIARCHS OCCURRED JULY 25 AND 27 RESULTING IN ARREST OF 11 KIRYAT ARBANS. THEY ARE SEEKING END TO LIMITATIONS ON JEWISH WORSHIP AT TOMBS AND PERMISSION TO RESTORE OLD JEWISH QUARTER IN HEBRON. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO JULY 28 JERUSALEM POST, ELEVEN RESIDENTS OF KIRYAT ARBA (JEWISH SETTLEMENT AT HEBRON) WERE ARRESTED JULY 27 AFTER BREAKING INTO TOMBS OF THE PATRIARCHS AT 2 A.M. THAT DAY. AFTER ENTERING TOMBS, GROUPS REPORTEDLY BROKE THROUGH DOOR WHICH ONLY MOSLEMS ARE PERMITTED TO USE.

3. THIS INCIDENT FOLLOWED EARLIER ONE ON JULY 25 WHEN GROUP OF 129 WORSHIPPERS REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO LEAVE PRAYER AREA IN TOMBS AFTER FRIDAY EVENING JEWISH SERVICE THEY LEFT OF THEIR OWN ACCORD AFTER SOLDIERS THREATENED TO EXPEL THEM FORCIBLY. ARABIC PRESS REPORTS THAT HEBRON MAYOR JA'ABARI HAS SENT PROTEST TO DEFENSE MINISTER PERES AND WEST BANK MILITARY GOVERNOR OVER THIS VIOLATION OF REGULATIONS FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WORSHIPPING AT TOMBS. A SIMILAR INCIDENT REPORTEDLY OCCURRED

EVENING OF JULY 27 WHEN A GROUP OF JEWS LOCKED THEMSELVES INSIDE A CHAPEL AND FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS DURING PERIOD TOMB IS SUPPOSED TO BE CLOSED TO JEWS IGNORED SOLDIERS' ORDERS TO LEAVE.

4. ACCORDING TO PRESS, KIRYAT ARBANS ARE SEEKING PERMISSION FROM DEFENSE MINISTRY TO FENCE OFF BUILDINGS IN OLD JEWISH QUARTER OF HEBRON WHERE MASSACRE BY ARAB RIOTERS TOOK PLACE IN 1929. THEY HELD A MASS MEETING FOLLOWING MEMORIAL SERVICE JULY 27 AND HAVE THREATENED TO OCCUPY VACANT BUILDINGS IN OLD JEWISH QUARTER IF PERMISSION NOT GRANTED FOR RESTORATION OF AREA. IN LIGHT OF THIS THREAT, IDF HAS TAKEN UP POSITIONS GUARDING SOME OF THESE BUILDINGS. KIRYAT ARBANS ALSO REPORTEDLY HAVE ASKED FOR END TO ALL RESTRICTIONS ON JEWISH WORSHIP AT TOMBS OF THE PATRIARCHS.

5. COMMENT: TOMBS HAVE BEEN SITE OF PERIODIC DISPUTES BETWEEN JEWS AND MOSLEMS IN HEBRON EVER SINCE CREATION OF KIRYAT ARBA. SINCE TOMBS ARE SACRED TO BOTH JEWS AND MOSLEMS, ISRAELI AUTHORITIES WORKED OUT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TWO GROUPS TO WORSHIP IN TOMBS DURING SPECIFIED PERIODS. KIRYAT ARBANS FROM TIME TO TIME HAVE SOUGHT EXTENSION OF PERIODS AVAILABLE TO THEM BUT GOI HAS IN GENERAL RESISTED THESE REQUESTS. ANY CHANGE IN CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS BOUND TO CAUSE DIFFICULTIES WITH MOSLEM. EFFORTS TO RESTORE OLD JEWISH QUARTER IN HEBRON WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY ALSO AROUSE RESENTMENT OF MOSLEM POPULATION, WHICH ALREADY CONCERNED AT CONTINUED EXPANSION OF KIRYAT ARBA ON OUTSKIRTS OF HEBRON.

6. ONE EXPLANATION OF LATEST INCIDENTS THAT IS MAKING ROUNDS IS THAT JEWS ALLEGE ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO BREAK INTO CABINET IN WHICH TORAH IS KEPT AND THAT THEY MUST, THEREFORE, BE IN ROOM WITH IT TO GUARD IT AT ALL TIMES. ACCORDING TO THIS STORY, HOWEVER, CABINET WAS DAMAGED WHEN BEING MOVED BY CUSODIANS AT TOMBS AND THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF M ANY MOSLEM ATTEMPT TO BREAK INTO IT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: JEWS, RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION, ARRESTS, KIRYAT ARBA
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975JERUSA01194
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750261-0132
From: JERUSALEM
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750717/aaaaaorl.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 AUG 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <28 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: n/a
TAGS: PINT, IS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006